Case 3:11-cv-02131-MEJ Document 1-1 Filed 04/29/11 Page 1 of 18 1 Benjamin W. Stein, SBN 260074 LAW OFFICES OF BENJAMIN STEIN 2 221 Fairmont Ave #4 Oakland, CA 94611 3 Phone: (415) 533-6958 Facsimile: None RICHARD W. WIEKING CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT 4 b.wolf.stein@gmail.com NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 5 Attorneys for Plaintiff 6 7 8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 10 Seth Rosenfeld 11 12 Plaintiff, COMPLAINT FOR INJUNCTIV RELIEF vs. 13 14 Federal Bureau of Investigation, and United 15 States Department of Justice 16 Defendant. 17 18 Plaintiff, Seth Rosenfeld, in support of his Complaint for 19 Injunctive Relief, alleges the following facts: 20 JURISDICTION AND VENUE 21 This is an action under the Freedom of Information Act, 5 22 U.S.C. § 552 ("FOIA") for injunctive and other appropriate relief 23 and seeking the disclosure and release of agency records improperly 24 withheld from Plaintiff Seth Rosenfeld by Defendant Department of 25 Justice (hereinafter, "DOJ") and its component Federal Bureau of 26 Investigation (hereinafter, "FBI") (collectively, "Defendants"). 27 This Court has both subject matter jurisdiction over this action

COMPLAINT

and personal jurisdiction over the parties pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(B). This Court also has subject matter jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331, 1346(a)(2), and 1361.

Venue is appropriate in this district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1391(e) and 1402(a)(1), and 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(B).

INTRADISTRICT ASSIGNMENT

3. This court has Intradistrict Assignment jurisdiction pursuant to L.R. §§ 3-2(c) and (d).

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

- 4. Plaintiff Seth Rosenfeld (hereinafter, "Rosenfeld") is a professional journalist based in San Francisco, California and has been so for more than 25 years. Rosenfeld seeks the records described below in his capacity as a professional journalist.
- 5. The DOJ is a Department of the Executive Branch of the United States Government, and includes the component entity FBI. The DOJ is an agency within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 552(f).
- 6. Rosenfeld was a staff reporter for the San Francisco Chronicle, employed since 2000. Prior to that Rosenfeld was a reporter for the San Francisco Examiner from 1984 until 2000.
- 7. Over the course of his career Rosenfeld has researched the FBI's operations with respect to the University of California, especially its flagship Berkeley campus, and in particular the FBI's activities as they relate to academic freedom, civil liberties and national security. Rosenfeld has focused on nationally prominent events in and around the campus community, including but not limited to the loyalty oath of the 1950s, the civil rights movement of the early 1960s, the Free Speech Movement of 1964, the anti-war movement of the latter 1960s, the development COMPLAINT

of ethnic studies, and other social and political movements. Rosenfeld has also examined the FBI's activities with respect to prominent people involved in these events, including for example the late renowned educator and University of California President Clark Kerr, the late United States President and Governor of California Ronald Reagan, and the late Free Speech Movement leader Mario Savio.

- 8. Rosenfeld has published numerous articles based on his research in FBI records concerning the above subjects in the <u>Daily Californian</u>, the <u>San Francisco Chronicle</u>, the <u>Los Angeles Times</u> and other publications. These include Rosenfeld's June 2002 series in the San Francisco Chronicle, entitled "The Campus Files." Attached hereto as Exhibit A are true and correct copies of the June 2002 Campus Files articles. The Campus Files series detailed the FBI's unconstitutional and unlawful activities at the University of California, including the FBI's efforts to have Clark Kerr fired as president of the university because FBI officials disagreed with Dr. Kerr's personal political views and his campus policies.
- 9. The significance of Rosenfeld's writing and research about the FBI activities with respect to the University of California have been recognized in the national press. The Associated Press carried reports based on The Campus Files series, which appeared in the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, and numerous other newspapers. CNN and ABC carried news articles about The Campus Files series, as did many other local television and radio stations. More than a dozen newspapers wrote editorials about the series. The New York Times said in a June 16, 2002 editorial about Rosenfeld's series, "These accounts of the F.B.I.'s malfeasance are COMPLAINT

a powerful reminder of how easily intelligence organizations deployed to protect freedom can become its worst enemy." Attached hereto as Exhibit A is a true and correct copy of the June 16, 2002 editorial.

- 10. The significance of Rosenfeld's research and writings based on this research has been further recognized by professional journalism and educational associations. Rosenfeld's series won several national awards, including the Edward Willis Scripps Award for Distinguished Service to the First Amendment, from the Scripps Howard Foundation; the Eugene S. Pulliam First Amendment Award from the Society of Professional Journalists; the Freedom of Information Award, from Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE); the Joseph L. Brechner Freedom of Information Award from the University of Florida; and a special citation from Harvard University's Goldsmith Award for Investigative Reporting.
- 11. Rosenfeld's research has been based largely on FBI records released to him pursuant to requests and complaints filed under the FOIA in the United States District Court for the Northern District of California in cases C 90-3576 MHP, C 85-1709, and C 85-2247 MHP. Rosenfeld substantially prevailed in these cases causing the Defendants to release numerous records.
- 12. The details of Rosenfeld's aforementioned FOIA requests and the litigation that arose from them are set forth in published decisions in consolidated actions C 85-2246 MHP, C 85-1709 MHP, and C 90-3576 MHP. In particular, pertinent details are set forth in decision at Rosenfeld v. United States Dep't of Justice, 761 F.Supp. 1440, 1441-43 (N.D. Cal. 1991), and Rosenfeld v. United States Dep't of Justice, 57 F.3d 803, 806-07 (9th Cir. 1995). These COMPLAINT

cases are still pending at the time of this complaint.

The Subject of the Current Request

- 13. Richard Masato Aoki, "Aoki," was born on November 20, 1938 and died on March 15, 2009, at the age of 70. In the 1960's he was a militant political activist and a prominent public figure who thrust himself into highly-publicized protests in and around the Berkeley area. In later years he further publicized these political activities by giving speeches and interviews about them.

 14) Aoki was involved with numerous activist organizations of intense interest to the FBI, including but not limited to: the Labor Youth League, the Young Socialist Alliance, the Socialist Worker's Party, the Committee to Uphold the Right to Travel, the Vietnam Day Committee, the Campus Committee for Lowndes County, the Tri-Continental Progressive Student's Committee, Asian American Political Alliance, the Third World Liberation Front, and the Black Panther Party.
- 15. Aoki played a prominent role in many of these organizations. For example:
- a) Between 1961 and 1967, he was continuously either a member and/or an executive officer of both the Young Socialist Alliance and the Socialist Workers Party.
- b) In December 1965, Aoki was a head of the International Committee of the Vietnam Day Committee acting as a liaison with anti-war groups from foreign countries.
- c) By early 1967 he had become the only Asian member of the Black Panther Party to achieve a leadership position and would serve as a field marshal. Aoki gave the Black Panthers some of their first weapons and provided weapons training as well. Bobby COMPLAINT

Seale, a founding member of the Black Panthers, stated in his book, Seize the Time, that Aoki gave the Panthers guns, including an M-1, 9mm, and .357 Magnum. The presence of such weapons contributed to the organization's confrontations with police and figured in the arrests of several Panthers including Seale, Huey Newton, and Eldridge Cleaver. Regardless of his motivations, Aoki, by arming the Panthers, set in motion "a series of events that placed the Bay Area under worldwide scrutiny," as the historian Curtis Austin noted in his book, Up Against the Wall, Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party, page 5. Attached hereto as Exhibit B are true and correct copies of excerpts from Seize the Time, The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton by Bobby Seale pages 72, 73, 79, 234, 368, 369, 382, and Up Against the Wall, Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party by Curtis J. Austin, page 56.

- d) In 1968 and 1969 Aoki was a leader of the Asian American Political Association, a radical student organization at UC-Berkeley.
- e) In 1969, Aoki was one of the main leaders of the Third World Liberation Front, whose protests involved violent confrontations at UC Berkeley during their demand for ethnic studies.
- 16. During this period the FBI intensively investigated many of the organizations Aoki was affiliated with on the purported grounds that FBI officials suspected that these organizations were involved in subversive activities. To wit:
- a) The Labor Youth League, the youth arm of the Communist Party, was on the Attorney General's list of subversive COMPLAINT

organizations. Attached hereto as Exhibit C is a true and correct copy of excerpts from The Age of McCarthyism, A Brief History with Documents, pages 168-172.

- b) The FBI targeted the Socialist Worker's Party and the Youth Socialist Alliance for intensive investigation and disruption under COINTELPRO, according to court rulings, congressional hearings and news accounts. See, for example, the U.S. Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (known as the "Church Committee" after its Chairman, Senator Frank Church), Book III, pages 4, 15.
- c) The FBI was so interested in the Socialist Workers Party that one in ten of its members was actually an FBI informant, according to the Washington Post article dated August 26, 1986 titled "Socialists Win Damages." Attached hereto as Exhibit D is a true and correct copy of the Washington Post article "Socialists Win Damages."
- d) Additionally, the FBI placed members of the Socialist Workers Party on its Security Index, a list of people on whom the FBI opened main files, conducted continuous investigation, and planned to arrest without warrant in the event of a national emergency, according to the Church Committee, Book III, page 438.
- e) The FBI extensively investigated the Vietnam Day Committee, compiling thousands of pages on the organization, according to FBI records.
- f) The FBI investigated, and sought to disrupt, the Black Panther Party, under COINTELPRO, according to the Church Committee, Book III. Attached hereto as Exhibit E is a true and correct copy of excerpts from the Church Committee, Book III, pages II, III, 3, COMPLAINT

4, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21 22, 187, 188, 436, 437, 438.

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- g) The FBI investigated the Asian American Political Alliance, compiling lengthy reports on the organization, according to FBI records.
- h) The FBI investigated the Third World Liberation Front, compiling thousands of pages on the organization, according to FBI records.
- 17. Aoki died on March 15, 2009 at the age of 70. He never married, had no children, and when he died he left no surviving relatives, according to his autopsy report and obituary. Several articles were written about Aoki's passing, including an article dated April 26, 2009 in the San Francisco Chronicle titled "Campus activist Richard Masato Aoki dies at 70," an article dated April 1-14, 2009 in the International Examiner titled "Renowned Activist Passes Away," and an article dated March 24, 2009 in The ANBM Source titled "Activist Richard Aoki Dies." Attached hereto as Exhibit F are the three above mentioned articles, "Campus Activist Richard Masato Aoki dies at 70," "Renowned Activist Passes Away," and "Activist Richard Aoki Dies."
- 18) There is thus great public interest in knowing the fullest possible extent of the government's activities in relationship to Aoki and, at the same time, in light of his public figure and deceased status, there is minimal interest in withholding any information on the basis of privacy.

The Aoki Request

19. Rosenfeld has continued his research in FBI files in order to write additional articles and a book. Rosenfeld has thus submitted additional separate requests related to his continuing research COMPLAINT

about the FBI's activities with respect to the University of California, including this request for Richard Masato Aoki. Despite the previous extensive litigation brought by Rosenfeld, Defendants have once again failed to comply with his FOIA requests. Defendants have released some records, withheld portions of some released records, and failed to release others. Further, Defendants have failed to conduct an adequate search for records that they have still not released. Defendants have failed to search all original records and search partially computerized records that were incomplete. The FBI is in the process of computerizing inactive and/or older paper records, and as a result these records are in disarray and the FBI does not properly search these records.

- 20. The following FOIA request regarding Richard Masato Aoki is at issue in the instant complaint. Rosenfeld has made other FOIA requests that the Defendants have similarly failed to comply with, and Rosenfeld may amend this complaint to add these other requests as necessary.
- 21. Rosenfeld is informed and believes and alleges that the FBI has adopted a deliberate policy of ignoring specific requests lawfully made under the FOIA with the purpose of discouraging, delaying and otherwise denying citizens lawful access to public records. As part of this policy, the FBI fails to conduct adequate searches for requested records, and on that basis falsely represents to the public that it has been unable to locate responsive records.
- 22. Although Defendants have received enormous budgetary increases to gather information for the purposes of protecting and serving COMPLAINT

the public, Defendants have allocated a smaller and smaller proportion of these funds toward complying with the FOIA to let citizens know what their government is up to. This perennial and deliberate underfunding of the FOIA staff is partly responsible for the FBI's failure to comply with the FOIA in these cases.

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CAUSE OF ACTION

RECORDS PERTAINING TO RICHARD MASOTO AOKI, DECEASED

(FOIPA No. 1130210-000 and 1156279-000, Appeal No. 09-2072,

Appeal No. 09-2134, Appeal No. AP-2011-00323, Appeal No. AP-2011-00614 and Appeal No. AP-2011-01003)

By letter dated May 5, 2009, Rosenfeld submitted a request for records to FBI Headquarters and the FBI San Francisco office requesting "any and all records" pertaining to Richard Masato Aoki, deceased. The request was in two parts. The first part sought any and all pre-processed records pertaining to Mr. Aoki that the FBI may have already had in its possession. The second part asked for a reprocessing of those records for any and all additional responsive records, including but not limited to main files and main file equivalents including all administrative and appendix pages, see references, Do Not File records, channelized records, search records and search slips, ELSUR records, index cards, records that are or were maintained in SAC safes, bulky exhibits, abstract records, and "JUNE" mail. Rosenfeld asked for expedited processing as the request sought information for professional news reporting purposes in which time is of the essence. Rosenfeld's letter also asked that records be processed in light of the deceased and public figure status of the people who may appear in the records, and in light of President Obama's directive that COMPLAINT

agencies release as much public information as possible. Attached hereto as Exhibit G are true and correct copies of the May 5, 2009 letters.

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- 24. By letter dated May 7, 2009, FBI Headquarters acknowledged receipt of the request and assigned it FOIPA No. 1130210-000. Attached hereto as Exhibit H is a true and correct copy of the May 7, 2009 letter.
- By letter dated May 13, 2009, FBI Headquarters informed Rosenfeld that his request for expedited processing had been 10 denied. Attached hereto as Exhibit I is a true and correct copy of 11 the May 13, 2009 letter.
 - 26. By letter dated June 17, 2009, Rosenfeld appealed to the DOJ for failure to release any records so far and for failure to grant expedited processing. Attached hereto as Exhibit J is a true and correct copy of the June 17, 2009 letter.
 - 27. By letters dated June 30, 2009, and July 7, 2009, the DOJ acknowledged receipt of the appeal and assigned it numbers 09-2072 and 09-2134 respectively. The DOJ denied the appeal in a letter dated July 23, 2009 and also closed Appeal No. 09-2134 as a Attached hereto as Exhibit K are true and correct duplicate. copies of the June 30, 2009, July 7, 2009, and July 23, 2009 letters.
 - As of August 17, 2009, the FBI had neither released any records nor provided a date when it reasonably expected to do so. Rosenfeld further appealed to the DOJ for the release of any and all records and asked the FBI to promptly release the records in a letters dated August 17, 2009. Attached hereto as Exhibit L are true and correct copies of the August 17, 2009 letters.

COMPLAINT

- 29. By letter dated December 14, 2009, the FBI notified Rosenfeld that approximately 2,000 potentially responsive documents had been located. The letter provided an estimate of the cost to Rosenfeld to produce the documents. Rosenfeld agreed to pay the cost in letter dated December 31, 2009 and reminded the FBI to advise him if any of requested records had been previously processed. Attached hereto as Exhibit M are true and correct copies of the December 14, 2009, and December 31, 2009 letters.
- 30. Despite the above correspondence, the FBI had still not released any records in the ten months since his initial request. By letter dated March 6, 2010, Rosenfeld again asked the FBI to promptly release all non-exempt records, and if unable to do so, to provide a specific date when it reasonable expected to release the records. Also by letter dated March 6, 2010, Rosenfeld further appealed to the DOJ that the FBI has failed to comply with the request. Attached hereto as Exhibit N are true and correct copies of the March 6, 2010 letters.
- 31. By letters dated July 3, 2010, Rosenfeld reminded the FBI the request was 14 months old and still no records have been released and issued another appeal to the DOJ for the release of all non-exempt records or to specify a date when the FBI reasonably expected to do so. This was fourth appeal to the DOJ without any records of any kind released. Attached hereto as Exhibit O are true and correct copies of the July 3, 2010 letters.
- 32. The DOJ again denied Rosenfeld's appeal by letter dated September 7, 2010, on the grounds that no adverse determination by the FBI had yet been made on the pending Aoki request. Since the request was now 16 months old and no records had been released, COMPLAINT

Rosenfeld again appealed to the DOJ to instruct the FBI to release all non-exempt records in a letter dated September 7, 2010. Attached hereto as Exhibit P are true and correct copies of the September 7, 2010 letters.

- 33. The first release of records came by letter dated October 1, 2010, a full 17 months after Rosenfeld's initial request. The FBI released 1,352 pages of potentially 1,859 responsive pages based on its application of the Section 552 FOIA exemptions. The FBI also indicated that an unspecified number of records had been destroyed and could not be reviewed. Attached hereto as Exhibit Q is a true and correct copy of the October 1, 2010 letter.
- 34. Based on his review of the released records, Rosenfeld further appealed to the DOJ by letter dated October 13, 2010. The FBI withheld 507 pages in full and also withheld numerous parts of the records it did release. Rosenfeld appealed the FBI's improper withholding of these records and also the failure to release numerous records that had apparently not been processed. Rosenfeld reiterated his concerns directly to the FBI regarding the failure of the FBI to release the records in a letter dated October 14, 2010. Attached hereto as Exhibit R are true and correct copies of the October 13, 2010 and October 14, 2010 letters.
- 35. Due to the FBI's continuing failure to properly release the records for Aoki, Rosenfeld filed another FOIA request with the FBI by letter dated October 14, 2010 concerning the outstanding request No. 1130210. This second request sought any and all search records of any kind used to process the request, any and all records generated in the processing of the request to in any way concern the FBI's decision to withhold any records from the request, any COMPLAINT

and all communications with other agencies concerning the processing of the request and any and all records documenting the destruction of records responsive to both requests. Attached hereto as Exhibit S is a true and correct copy of the October 14, 2010 letter.

- 36. In letters dated November 1, 2010, the FBI acknowledged receipt of the new request, assigned it FOIPA Request No. 1156279-000 and indicated that it would address only responsive abstracts, while index cards and search slips would be addressed by request No. 1130210-001. The FBI also reopened the original request No. 1130210-000. Attached hereto as Exhibit T are true and correct copies of the November 1, 2010 letters.
- 37. Rosenfeld wrote the FBI by letter dated November 11, 2010, to address the continuing failure of the FBI to properly release all non-exempt responsive records. Rosenfeld indicated the specific portions of his request that have yet to be addressed and again asked for the prompt release of all non-exempt responsive records or a specified time when they can be reasonably expect to release the records. Attached hereto as Exhibit U is a true and correct copy of the November 11, 2010 letter.
- 38. By letter dated November 12, 2010 the DOJ acknowledged receipt of Rosenfeld's appeal and assigned it No. AP-2011-00323. Attached hereto as Exhibit V is a true and correct copy of the November 12, 2010 letter.
- 39. By letter dated December 9, 2010, the FBI released 15 of 15 pages of responsive documents under FOIPA No. 1130210-001 containing search records. Attached hereto as Exhibit W is a true and correct copy of the December 9, 2010 letter.

COMPLAINT

1 40. By letter dated December 10, 2010, Rosenfeld further appealed
2 the FBI's failure to release all non-exempt records for both
3 requests 1130210-000 and 1156279-000. Attached hereto as Exhibit
4 X is a true and correct copy of the December 10, 2010 letter.

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- 41. By letter dated December 23, 2010, the DOJ acknowledged receipt of Rosenfeld's most recent appeal and assigned it number AP-2011-00614. Attached hereto as Exhibit Y is a true and correct copy of the December 23, 2010 letter.
- 42. By letter dated December 23, 2010, the FBI released 7 of 7 pages responsive to FOIPA No. 1156279-000. Attached hereto as Exhibit Z is a true and correct copy of the December 23, 2010 letter.
- 43. By letter dated December 23, 2010, Rosenfeld filed a further appeal based on the 15 page release of records on December 9, 2010. Rosenfeld alleged the FBI failed to conduct a full and complete search for the records and was withholding non-exempt responsive records. Attached hereto as Exhibit AA is a true and correct copy of the December 23, 2010 letter.
- 44. By letter dated January 19, 2011, Rosenfeld further appealed to the DOJ the 7 page release of records on December 23, 2010, and alleged the FBI failed to conduct a full and complete search for the requested records and is withholding non-exempt responsive records. Rosenfeld reminded the FBI in a separate letter dated January 19, 2011, that FOIA does not permit agencies to engage in open ended delays that serve to constructively deny requests. Attached hereto as Exhibit BB are true and correct copies of the January 19, 2011 letters.
- 45. By letter dated January 24, 2011, the FBI informed Rosenfeld COMPLAINT

the direct response referrals sent to the Department of defense are still pending. Attached hereto as Exhibit CC is a true and correct copy of the January 24, 2011 letter.

- 46. By letter dated February 3, 2011, the DOJ acknowledged Rosenfeld's further appeal, presumably responding to Rosenfeld's January 24, 2011 letter, and assigning it number AP-2011-01003. Attached hereto as Exhibit DD is a true and correct copy of the February 3, 2011 letter.
- A7. By letter dated April 4, 2011, Rosenfeld advised the FBI that Donald L. Cox, a member of the Black Panthers, died recently. Thus, Mr. Cox's deceased status militates in favor of greater releases of any instance in which his name may appear in the requested records. Attached hereto as Exhibit EE is a true and correct copy of the April 4, 2011 letter and a copy of New York Times article dated March 13, 2011 titled "D.L. Cox, a Leader of Radical During 1960s, Dies at 74."
- 48. To date, Defendants have failed to provide Rosenfeld all records concerning Richard Masato Aoki as required by the FOIA. In total, the FBI has produced 1374 pages, some with deletions, and withheld an additional 507 pages in full. On information and belief, Rosenfeld believes there are additional non-exempt responsive records Defendants have not produced.
- 49. Rosenfeld has exhausted the applicable administrative remedies with respect to this request.
- 25 | 50. The Defendants have wrongfully withheld the requested records 26 | from Rosenfeld.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff Seth Rosenfeld prays that this Court:

- A) Order Defendants to conduct complete and thorough searches for all requested records, and produce all requested records so located, based on the following names and reasonable variations of them, including but not limited to Richard Aoki, Richard Aokie, Richard Aoki, Richard Aokie, Richard Aoki, Richard Aokie, Richard Aoki, Richard Masato Aoki, Richard Matsui Aoki, Richard Masa Aoki, and Richard Ford, Richard Iokey, Richard Assegai, Richard Aoika, Richard Masata, Richard Matsui, and Richard Masa;
- B) Apply the lists of deceased people and other information provided by Rosenfeld and otherwise readily available to the FBI to the responsive records to ensure that all information is properly released, and produce all requested records so located;
- C) Order Defendants to promptly release to Rosenfeld all nonexempt requested records and all reasonably segregable non-exempt portions of such records;
- D) Grant discovery relevant to handling or processing of any and all requested records, including but not limited to, all main files, see references, Do Not File Files, channelized records, search slips, ELSUR records, index cards, records that are or were maintained in SAC safes, bulky exhibits, destruction of file records, and grant discovery relevant to the FBI's underfunding of the FOIA processing unit and its deficient computerization of paper records;
- E) Award Plaintiff costs and reasonably attorneys fees incurred in this action; and
- F) Grant such other relief as the Court may deem just and proper.

 COMPLAINT

Case 3:11-cv-02131-MEJ Document 1-1 Filed 04/29/11 Page 18 of 18

DATED: 29 April 2011

Respectfully submitted,

Benjamin W Stein LAW OFFICES OF BENJAMIN STEIN

Attorney for Plaintiff SETH ROSENFELD

COMPLAINT